

**A Proclamation submitted by
Legislators Miller-Williams and Grant**

RE: Congratulating Juneteenth Festival of Buffalo, Inc. on Hosting their 40th Consecutive Annual Festival and Parade

WHEREAS, the Juneteenth Festival of Buffalo, NY is an important component of summertime events in the Buffalo-Niagara region; and

WHEREAS, Juneteenth is an expression and extension of American freedom and, like the Fourth of July, a time for all Americans to celebrate independence, human rights, civil rights and freedom. The celebration of Juneteenth is not only a showcase event of the African American community's positive contributions to the American way of life, but it also makes a statement for all Americans that the United States is truly the 'Land of the Free'; and

WHEREAS, according to historical records, the Emancipation Proclamation was issued by President Abraham Lincoln on September 22, 1862 ending the practice of slavery. On June 19, 1865, Major General Gordon Granger of the Union Army rode into Galveston, Texas in final execution of the Emancipation Proclamation. Granger's announcement was met with great celebration among the population of enslaved Africans, marking Juneteenth as the oldest known observance of the ending of slavery in the United States; and

WHEREAS, the Juneteenth Festival of Buffalo was started in 1976 by B.U.I.L.D., a community-based organization, as a culturally relevant alternative to the country's Bicentennial Celebration; and

WHEREAS, entertainment and festivity were abundant as the group blocked off part of Jefferson Avenue, the "Main Street" of Buffalo's Black community, for a weekend celebration. Murals were painted and vendors set up booths to sell ethnic foods and wares; and

WHEREAS, after several years, the Juneteenth Festival outgrew Jefferson Avenue and is now held in Martin Luther King Jr. Park at the intersection of Best Street and Fillmore Avenue; and

WHEREAS, to reflect its broader mission, Juneteenth Festival, Inc. received 501(c) (3) status in 1985 and in 2000, the name of the organization was changed Juneteenth of Buffalo, Inc., to distinguish themselves as the third largest festival in the world. In 2015, the organization will host their First Annual Gala to commemorate the 40th Consecutive Festival and Parade in Buffalo, NY; and

WHEREAS, Juneteenth of Buffalo, Inc. exists exclusively for charitable and educational purposes and partners with existing organizations with similar community-based objectives to help achieve its mission. The festival is staffed by volunteers who are committed to actively preserving and promoting the broad spectrum of African American heritage through educational and cultural activities that will benefit the community as a whole.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED, that the Erie County Legislature pauses in its deliberations to congratulate Juneteenth Festival of Buffalo, Inc. on hosting their 40th Consecutive Festival and Parade, to acknowledge their contribution to the Arts and Cultural community in Erie County, and to recognize their commitment to preserving the history of Juneteenth; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this Legislature does hereby proclaim June 6-14 as the Juneteenth Festival week in Erie County.